

Application No. 10/811,168

Filed: March 26, 2004

TC Art Unit: 3677

Confirmation No.: 1995

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A safety buckle, comprising:
  - a socket having a cavity with a first surface;
  - a first catch in the cavity and adjoining the first surface and directed ~~protruding~~ away from the first surface;
  - a plug with a central arm for insertion into the socket;
  - a first latch on the central arm sized and positioned to cooperate with the catch when the plug is inserted into the socket to engage the plug and socket;
  - a disengagement device on the socket ~~or plug~~ cooperating with the central arm or the catch to disengage the latch and the catch upon actuation of the device; and
  - a second latch or catch on an opposing side of the cavity or central arm, respectively, and sized and positioned with a symmetry to the first latch or first catch, respectively, for providing an alternate engagement with the corresponding first catch or first latch, such that the socket and plug may be engaged independent of a relative orientation of the socket and plug.
2. (Withdrawn) The buckle according to claim 1, wherein:
  - the socket includes the second catch; and
  - the first latch is a protrusion of the central arm.

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3. (Previously Presented) The buckle according to claim 1, wherein the central arm includes the second latch for cooperating with the first catch of the socket.

4 - 5. (Canceled)

6. (Withdrawn) The buckle according to claim 1, wherein the cavity includes a second surface opposing the first surface and symmetrical opening in the first and second surfaces forming the first and second catches, the opening being sized and shaped to cooperate with the first latch on the central arm of the plug, wherein the device is a button coupled to a lever operable to displace the latch to prevent cooperation between the latch and the openings.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A safety buckle, comprising:  
a first buckle member including a first engagement part;  
a second buckle member including a second engagement part;

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the first and second buckle members being complementary shaped to provide an interactive fit when the first and second buckle members are fitted together;

the first and second engagement parts being cooperative to retain the first and second buckle members together when the first and second buckle members are fitted together;

one of the first and second engagement parts having a symmetrically functional counterpart, such that one of the first or second engagement parts cooperates with the counterpart to retain the first and second buckle members together when the first and second buckle members are fitted together in a different orientation, the other of the first or second engagement parts being free from engagement;

a disengagement device on one or more of the first or second buckle members operable to disengage cooperative engagement parts or the counterpart when actuated; and

an actuator integrally coupled with the disengagement device and operable to actuate the disengagement device when operated.

9. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 8, further comprising a central arm on one of the first or second

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buckle members, the first or second engagement part being located on the central arm.

10. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 9, wherein the counterpart is located on an opposite side of the central arm from the first or second engagement part.

11. (Withdrawn) The safety buckle according to claim 9, wherein the counterpart is located on the other of the first or second buckle member from that having the central arm.

12. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 8, further comprising two central arms on one of the first or second buckle members, one central arm having one of the first or second engagement parts thereon, and the other central arm having the counterpart.

13. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 9, wherein the engagement part on the central arm is formed as a recess with a shoulder near an end of the central arm, the counterpart also being arranged on the central arm.

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14. (Withdrawn) The safety buckle according to claim 8, further comprising:

a cavity in one of the first or second buckle members to receive an interacting portion of the other of the first or second buckle members; and

the first or second engagement part is provided as a projection in the cavity to cooperate with the other of the first or second engagement parts, the counterpart also being located in the cavity.

15. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 8, further comprising a disengagement device on one of the first or second buckle members for disengaging the first or second engagement parts or counterpart to permit the buckle to be unclasped.

16. (Previously Presented) The safety buckle according to claim 15, wherein one of the first or second engagement parts is located on the disengagement device.

17. (Currently Amended) A safety buckle that can be clasped in a plurality of orientations, comprising:

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a first buckle member and a second buckle member, being complementary shaped to fit together with each other in a clasped condition;

a first engagement structure and a second ~~a plurality of~~ engagement structures internal to the buckle in the clasped condition with ~~at least one~~ of the first and second engagement structures on each of the first and second buckle members and sized and positioned to cooperate with each other to retain the first and second buckle members together in the clasped condition in a first orientation;

~~at least another of the plurality of~~ engagement structures located on one of the first or second buckle members and sized and positioned to cooperate with one of the first and second ~~at least one~~ engagement structures to retain the first and second buckle members together in the clasped condition in a second orientation different from the first; and

another ~~the other of the first and second~~ ~~at least one~~ engagement structures being free from engagement in the second orientation;

a disengagement device on one or more of the first or second buckle members operable to disengage cooperative engagement structures when actuated; and

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an actuator integrally coupled with the disengagement device  
and operable to actuate the disengagement device when operated.

18. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 17,  
further comprising a central arm on one of the first or second  
buckle members, the one of the first and second ~~at least one~~  
engagement structures being located on the central arm.

19. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 18,  
wherein the ~~at least~~ another engagement structure is located on an  
opposite side of the central arm from the one of the first and  
second ~~at least one~~ engagement structures.

20. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 17,  
further comprising two central arms on one of the first or second  
buckle members, one central arm having the one of the first and  
second ~~at least one~~ engagement structures, and the other central  
arm having the ~~at least~~ another engagement structure.

21. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 19,  
wherein the one of the first and second engagement structures ~~at~~  
~~least one or~~ the another engagement structure on the central arm

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is formed as a recess with a shoulder near an end of the central arm.

22. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 17, further comprising a disengagement device on one of the first or second buckle members for disengaging the first and second ~~at least one engagement structures or the at least one of the first and second engagement structures~~ and the another engagement structures to permit the buckle to be unclashed.

23. (Currently Amended) The safety buckle according to claim 22, wherein the one of the first and second ~~at least one or another~~ engagement structures is located on the disengagement device.